

## **THE AMHERST ARTMETERS PROJECT**

In the spring of 2008 the Town of Amherst faced a quandary: the penny parking meters located on the downtown streets were no longer useable, yet their bases were needed as holders for holiday flags.

Envisioned by a group of local citizens, the ArtMeters project offered a solution to this problem. It was suggested that local artists transform the outdated meters into a gallery of sidewalk art that focused on the theme *What I Love About Amherst*. The ArtMeters project was approved by the Amherst Town Council at the January 14, 2009 meeting as an exciting and unique way to draw visitors, shoppers and diners to downtown Amherst. Businesses, organizations, non-profits, schools and individuals joined together in a creative community project to preserve an important and diminishing feature of the American small town: its unique personality. In the spring of 2009, ArtMeters invited individuals, organizations and artists to participate by submitting an application to sponsor and/or design an ArtMeter.

Sponsors submitted an application and contributed \$100 to cover a one-year period of sponsorship. In return, sponsors were recognized on a plaque attached to each meter and were celebrated at the unveiling.

Artists submitted an application including drawings of the finished meter that were reviewed and approved by an artistic panel whose task was to evaluate the artistic quality, suitability and relationship to the 2009 theme. Once approved from an artistic standpoint, a practicality panel looked at overall weather resistance and sustainability for the year of display. Artists chose to either donate their work or be reimbursed \$50.00 to cover materials.

On July 8, 2009 twenty-two ArtMeters were installed on Main Street and were welcomed at an unveiling celebration attended by over 120 people. The honor of unveiling each meter was given to the sponsor and artist. The meters will remain on view for a period of one year.

Next year it is planned that another group of defunct meter heads will be decorated using the theme "The Town of Amherst - 100 years" due for unveiling in the spring of 2010 to coincide with the Town's Centennial Celebration. Applications for 2010 will be available in December 2009 from the Town of Amherst website [www.amherstva.gov](http://www.amherstva.gov), from an ArtMeter volunteer or via inquiry to ArtMeters, P.O. Box 1046, Amherst, VA 24521